

First Love.

From the Saturday Herald.

It is one of the oddest points of difference between man and woman that woman has no First Love. The long alphabet of her emotions is without any distinct end or beginning; she mounts by insensible gradations from dolls and kittens and pet brothers to the zenith of passion, to descend by the same insensible gradations from the zenith of passion through pet brothers to tabby cats. There is no such event as a first kiss in a boy's life to mark for woman the transition from girlhood to the sudden maturity of passion; she has been kissing and petting and fondling and petting from her cradle, and she will pet and fondle and kiss to her grave. Love, in the technical sense of the word, is with her little more than an intensifying of her ordinary life. There is no new picture, but the colors are for the while a little heightened and the tone raised. Presently the vividness of color will fade again, and the cool greys lower the tone, and the passion of life will have died away. But there will be no definite moment at which one could fairly say that love came or went. A girl who is not whispering in a lover's ear will always say, frankly enough, that she never knew what it is to be in love. There is one obvious deduction which she forgets to draw, that there never can be a time when she can know what it is to be in love. Here and there, of course, a woman may be cold, or later in development, or more conscious, and may be more rigidly marked lines the phases of her life. But even then, if she be a woman at all, she can have no first love. Feeling, with woman, has no past, as it has no future. Every phase of her life begins with an act of oblivion. Every love is a first love. "I never loved any one before" is said, and said truly, to a dozen loving ears in succession. "The first thing I should like to meet with in Paradise," said Lady Wortley Montagu, "would be the river Lethe, the stream of forgetfulness." But woman finds a little rivulet of Lethe at every stage of her life's career. If she remembers the past at all, it is to offer it up as a burnt sacrifice to the deity of the present. When Cleopatra talked about Caesar to Mark Antony, she passed, no doubt, her fingers through her lover's hair and wondered how she could ever have doted on such a bald-headed fellow as the Dictator. Had she succeeded in charming Octavius, she would have wondered equally at her infatuation for such a ne'er-do-well as Antony. And so it is no wonder that a woman's first love, even if she realizes it at all, goes down in this general wreck of the past. But in man's life it is a revolution. It is, in fact, the one thing that makes him man. The world of boyhood is strictly a world of boys. Sisters, cousins, aunts, mothers, are mixed up in the general crowd of barbarians that stand without the playground. There are few warmer or more poetic affections than the chivalrous friendship of schoolfellows; there is no truer or more genuine worship than a boy's worship of the hero of the scrimmage or the cricket-field. It is a fine world in itself, but it is a wonderfully narrow and restricted world. Not a girl may peep over the palings. Girls can't jump, or lag out, or swim up a tree; they have nothing to talk about as boys talk; they never heard of that glorious swipe of Old Brown's; they are awful milk-sops; they cry and "tell mamma;" they are afraid of a governess and of a cow. It is impossible to conceive a creature more utterly contemptible in a boy's eyes than a girl of his own age usually is. Then in some fatal moment comes the revolution. The barrier of contempt goes down with a crash. The boy-world disappears. Brown, that god of the playground, is cast to the owls and to the bats. There is a sudden coolness in the friendship that was to last from school to the grave. Paper-chases and the annual match with the "old fellows" cease to be the highest objects of human interest. There is less excitement than there was last year when a great cheer welcomes the news that Mugby has got the Ireland. The boy's life has become muddled and confused. The old existence is sheering off, and the new comes shyly, fitfully. It is only by a sort of compulsion that he will own that he is making all this "fuss" about a girl. For the moment he rebels against the spell of that one little face, the witchery of that one little hand. He lingers on the borders of this new country from whence there is no return to the old-playing field. He is shy, strange to this world of women, and women's talk, and women's ways. The surest, steadiest foot on the cricket-ground stumbles over footstools, and tangles itself in colored wools. The sturdiest arm that ever wielded bat trembles at the touch of a tiny finger. The voice that rang out like a trumpet among the tumult of foot-ball bushes and trembles and falters in saying half-a-dozen commonplace words. The old sense of mastery is gone. He knows that every chit in the hursey has found out his secret, and is laughing over it. He blushes, and a boy's blush is a hot, painful thing, when the sisterly heads bend together, and he hears them whispering what a fool he is. Yes, he is a fool—that is one thing which he feels quite certain about. There is only one other thing that he feels even more certain about—that he is in love, and that love has made him a man.

We are not, of course, going to trench on the field of poets and moral preachers, or to expound, like Sir James Newcome, the philosophy of the affections, or to demonstrate, with Miss Faithfull and Mrs. Fawcett, the great office which First Love fulfills in the economy of man. The only remark we have to make is the very obvious one which moral preachers may be pardoned for forgetting, that it is on the whole a wonderfully pleasant thing. If one enters it through Purgatory, it is none the less a Paradise at which one arrives, an Eden with its tree of knowledge and its tree of life. There is none of the distrust, the irony, the low-pitched expectations of after affection; no practical second thoughts; no calculations about wedding-rings and marriage settlements. In its beginning love still hovers in a sort of debatable land between the real and the unreal, with a good deal of the fun and make-believe of boyhood and girlhood about it yet. There is the old school trick of "secrets," of "mysteries," whispering in corners, stolen glances, dropped gloves, little letters deposited in crafty hiding-places. There is the carrying out of the new ritual of love as love novels give it to us, the stealing photographs and the kissing of looks of hair, and the writing love poems with a certain weakness in their rhyme, and the watching the light in one's mistress' windows. It is wonderful with what a rigorous exactitude, with what a grave seriousness, we carry out our part in the pleasant little comedy. But it is no comedy to us while we figure it in. It is the revelation of a new world, a world of light and joy, a world, too, of wonder and enchantment and mystery. "Tout est mystère dans l'amour," we sing with old Pontalieu, "ses fleches, son carquois, son flambeau, son enfance," and of these mysteries we are admitted as participants. It is hard not to feel a little

fetter of pride at being not quite what other people are, not quite what we ourselves were a month ago. What would others understand of this new love-language that we talk? What of our spasmodic little chatter, broken with passionate ejaculations that have no relation to any subject that could be discussed in earth or heaven, interrupted by silences more eloquent than words? What of those delicious caprices that follow on the sense of power, those bright little quarrels that only exist in the faith that severance is impossible? What of this new love of letter-writing in fingers that once loved a pen? We exult in the thought that the "Valentine" day lingers the longer, the longer the Post Office more than any other day in the year. We laugh to think of a great government department in a flutter because Love says "write," and we have written. What of this new delight in solitude, in "mooning about," as we used to call it in our unregenerate days? Surely it is something that love conquers boredom, that one is never alone when one can peep at a locket, or spell over again those sweetest and most crossed of letters, or debate whether the object of one's passion looked best in a blue dress or a brown. But all these are the mere outer accidents of life, and it is life itself that is so changed. What a fresh boisterous breeze of life and liberty comes sweeping down on the tranquil little soul whose deepest joys and sorrows have been over her lessons and her doll! All the youth in her veins ebbs out at the touch. She is a hoyden, a scapegrace, in a moment; the governess shrinks her shoulders; mamma begins to think of her "coming out." Then there is the sudden revelation, the delicious inequalities and inconsistencies of a period of transition, the shyness and stiffness, the silence, the reverie. Then at a bound there is the return on pure girlhood, the defiant revolt, the rebellion against this absorption in another. *Odi et amo*, it is the close neighborhood of the two that gives each its charm. She is a flirt, a coquette; for what is coquetry but the half-incredulity of a girl unable to believe in her own happiness, eager to convince herself by any experience of the new strength and attraction she has gained? After life brings deeper, intenser passion, but never sensations so vivid, so rapid, so exquisitely contrasted, never so involuntary. A girl lies passive in the very dream of love, as emotion after emotion sweeps over her, faith and jealousy and bitterness and delight, like the wind sweeping over Aeolian chords and wakening music as wild and as wayward as the music in her heart. What other moment of life gives her those "grands ennuis entremêlés de joie" that the old French poetess sung about—

"Quand je pense avoir plus de douleur,
Suns y penser je me trouve hors de peine;
Plus grand me croit ma joie certaine,
Et plus elle me fait désirer l'ennui,
Plus remet en moi mon premier maître."

Men spend a great deal too much time, says a great philosopher, over love. We share Mr. Mill's opinion, though probably Mr. Mill would hardly share our grounds for it. We don't grudge a moment given to a man's first love, because a man believes in it. "Credo quia impossibile"—"I believe just because it is impossible"—replied Tertullian to the objector to his faith; and it is a gain to humanity that at the very outset of life one should meet and believe in a thing so impossible as first love. We are saved at any rate from the dreary gospel of Mr. Buckle, from regarding ourselves as machines, and tabulating our lives in averages. So too there are days, early days in a man's course, when, sitting alone and looking on a sunset, he feels like a grain of sand at the mercy of winds that blow whence and whether he knows not. First love at any rate saves us out of thoughts like these by quickening in us pulses of pain and pleasure that will beat on, drive the winds as they list. How much too of the reverence, the reserve, the grace and refinement of character, springs out of all these days of distant, hushed worship, of all-surrendering, all-daring faith? A mere girl, like a mere day, rouses within us thoughts too deep for tears. That first touch of passion gives a beauty of its own to the temper of a man, as it gives it to the face of a woman. Who has not noted the strange, sweet change that softens the abrupt gesture, and gives music to the hasty speech, in the hoyden when love's finger first touches her? When Pygmalion's statue-bride quickened into human life, she may have felt, one fancies, an inexpressible joy in the sense of the capture her beauty had created, and could sustain. It is this new sense—this consciousness that, as she simply lives and moves, her grace and power is going out of her to gladden at least one heart of man's—that quickens a girl's face out of the hardness and improbability of earlier years. From a mere physical, immobile form, it becomes life and spirit, sensitive to every wave of thought, feeling, reflection. The very wonder of the new world she looks out upon, its interest, its awe, mirror themselves in the quick alterations of enthusiasm, of terror, of tenderness. It is quite as well to get a little beauty into the world, quite as well to preserve a little poetry in man, and while first love does this we don't mean to surrender it to Mr. Mill. We do freely give up to him his successors. The mere conventional repetition of the real thing, when its first fervor of faith has fled, the repetition of the old love-rituals by lips that have learned the irony of them, the mechanical performance of the ritual that has become a sham, this is—we agree with Mr. Mill—a sheer waste of human time. When a man has got safely over thirty, and looks back on the number of these performances, their extreme dreariness, and the time they have cost him, he feels a twinge of compunction, and a certain pleasure in the consciousness that he is now at any rate secure till forty. As for women, till they are quickened by the apostleship of the champions of their "rights," they will probably go on thinking these little farces the pleasantest things in life. After all they are not more ridiculous than the general tenor of their existence, and woman has, at any rate, more time to waste than man.

NO BACK DOWN.

Benner and that One Hundred Thousand Dollars Horse.

To a gentleman who owned of Mr. Benner if his offer of one hundred thousand dollars for a horse that would equal Dexter's great performance to a road wagon was still in force, he had no reservation in regard to it as to age, soundness, etc. Mr. Benner replied as follows:

Dear Sir:—I received your favor of the 11th inst., in which you inquired of me whether I had any horse for sale that I considered as good as Dexter's recent performance of 2:15 1/2, to a road wagon, and I have no conditions of the kind to interpose. I throw the door wide open. Of course, I should prefer a younger and sounder horse than Dexter, but I shall not make a barrier against any horse undertaking to perform the feat whether he be young or old—sound or unsound—lame or free from lameness—whether he have a spavin or two, three, four, or five—be blind of one eye or both—be un-winded or foundered—so long as he performs the feat of starting as Dexter started from my stable in Twenty-seventh street near Sixth avenue, at 1 o'clock P.M., and trotting during the same afternoon on Prospect Park, as Dexter trotted, a mile in 2:15 1/2, to a road wagon and returning together in 2:15 1/2, I have no objection to his performing the feat.

every inch of the mile must be trotted, as Dexter trotted it, without a single skip or jump; and I must have the privilege of witnessing and timing the trial, and taking one or two friends with me. The owner of the horse can also have one or two friends present; but under no circumstances will I be concerned, directly or indirectly, in a public advertised trial, where money is received at the entrance gate, or opportunity is given for betting.

If you know any one who owns a horse that can perform this feat, I will thank you to send him to me, as I want to own the animal, even if he has any one or all of the blemishes which I have mentioned. With or without him I would consider him cheap at the price named, after performing the feat in question, and I can assure you that if you put me in the way of procuring such a horse, either with or without money, you will have my lasting gratitude, and find me ready at any time, whether night or day, to reciprocate the favor.

Yours truly,
ROBERT BENNER.

MARK TWAIN.

The letter from him read at the "California Pioneer" banquet.

Yesterday a banquet was given to the California Pioneers in New York, at which the following highly interesting, highly instructive, and intensely amusing letter from Mark Twain was read:

EXAMINA, Oct. 1, 1869.—To the California Pioneers.—Gentlemen:—Circumstances render it out of my power to take advantage of the invitation extended to me through Mr. Simpson, and be present at your dinner in New York. I regret this very much, for there are several among you whom I would have a right to join hands with on the score of my sentimentalism, and I suppose I would have a sublime general right to shake hands with the rest of you on the score of kinship in Californian up and down in sentiment. You would recognize Californian blood in me, I fancy. The old, old story would sound familiar to you. I have the usual stock of reminiscences, and I have a good deal of it. I have purchased largely in the "Wide West," the "Winemake," and other fine claims, and was very wealthy. I fared sumptuously on butter and beef, and for dinner every Sunday, when none but the aristocrats could afford such grandeur. But I finished by feeding half a dozen of my own children, and I suppose I would have a sublime general right to shake hands with the rest of you on the score of kinship in Californian up and down in sentiment. You would recognize Californian blood in me, I fancy. The old, old story would sound familiar to you. I have the usual stock of reminiscences, and I have a good deal of it. I have purchased largely in the "Wide West," the "Winemake," and other fine claims, and was very wealthy. I fared sumptuously on butter and beef, and for dinner every Sunday, when none but the aristocrats could afford such grandeur. But I finished by feeding half a dozen of my own children, and I suppose I would have a sublime general right to shake hands with the rest of you on the score of kinship in Californian up and down in sentiment. You would recognize Californian blood in me, I fancy. The old, old story would sound familiar to you. 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